

“Lake Erie is such a precious natural resource and it is central to our efforts to create new jobs and economic opportunity in Northern Ohio . Commercial and sport fishing generate more than \$7 billion a year for the Great Lakes regional economy. This new vessel will provide state-of-the-art technology to help protect our vital Lake Erie fishery.”

Kaptur said the U.S. Department of Interior will allocate funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for a pair of new 60- to 65-foot research vessels, one on Lake Erie and the other on Lake Ontario . They will replace the Sandusky-based R/V Musky II, built in 1960 to serve Lake Erie, and its counterpart on Lake Ontario , the R/V Kaho, which was built in 1961 and is housed in Oswego , N.Y. Both vehicles monitor lake ecology for the purpose of fisheries management.

The new ships will be built after contracts are awarded through a competitive bidding process. Congresswoman Kaptur said replacing the older, diesel-powered ships will mean safer working conditions, improved fuel economy and significantly lower maintenance costs, which will conserve taxpayer dollars.

Replacement of the current aging vessels was recommended by USGS officials in light of prohibitively high maintenance costs for the Musky II and the Kaho. The Kaho, for instance, required more than half a million dollars of safety upgrades, equipment replacement and deferred maintenance between 2004 and 2007.